

An Epidemic: Violence against Women in the Philippines

Ms. Arisa JUNIO (the Philippines)

“Violence against women is a significant public health problem, as well as a fundamental violation of women’s human rights” (World Health Organization, 2013). In a report developed by the World Health Organization, the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and the South African Medical Research Council, it shows that there are two prevalent forms of violence against women which are violence by an intimate partner (intimate partner violence) and sexual violence by someone other than a partner (non-partner sexual violence) (World Health Organization, 2013). Based on the overall report’s findings, 35% of women worldwide have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence. While there are many other forms of violence that women may be exposed to, this already represents a large proportion of the world’s women (World Health Organization, 2013).



Senator Pia Cayetano of the 16th Philippine Congress advocating for Anti-Violence against Women.

In the Philippines, there are reports on violence against women conducted by government agencies, non-government organizations, women’s groups, and advocacy groups. These reports were conducted in order to comply with Republic Act 9262, commonly known as Anti-Violence against Women and Their Children (anti-VAWC) Act. Spousal abuse, being one of its forms, is also rampant as one Filipina is abused every two hours (Gabriela, 2009 as cited by Boncodin, et al. 2010). According to the Philippine Commission on Women, emotional and other forms of non-personal violence are the most common types of spousal violence (23% of ever-married women). One in seven ever-married women experienced physical violence by their husbands while

8% experience sexual violence by their husbands (Philippine Commission on Women, 2013).

According to Representative Luz C. Ilagan of Gabriela Women’s Party of the

Philippines, violence against women has been a prevalent crime against women. “Cases of violence against women increase, they also become graver and more heinous (Ilagan, 2012)”. Despite many government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and different initiatives in combating violence against women, many victims prefer to remain silent and also remain with their abusive partners. According to Sanchez and Sobrevega-Chan (1998), women victims of abuse prefer to open up to their parents and friends because the abuse they have experienced is a private matter.

In the same study, the wives were asked what they did after being beaten. The typical women’s answer would be: they did not seek help but rather would go to their parents’ house or even approach their relatives and friends. A few numbers of women would get emotional support, which would fight and hit back their husbands. Instead, they considered their husband’s assault as a private matter without a need of intervention of a third party. Men’s response on the same question would be: their wives did nothing after being battered as they were silent, crying, and talked out things with them. Few men also stated that there were a small number of women that would fight back, leave their children and seek help of the authority (Sanchez and Sobrevega-Chan, as cited by Guerrero, 1999, and Boncodin, et al., 2010).

Amnesty International [AI] (2004) describes the prevalence of domestic violence in the Philippines as “endemic” (Boncodin, et al., 2010). In order to address violence against women in the Philippines, different agencies, organizations and movements should not only help address the phenomenon, but also personal initiatives should be seen in order to empower women victims of any form of abuse.